



GENDER-RESPONSIVE DDR

Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda



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PREFACE

Over the past years, United Nations peacekeeping has made great progress in promoting gender-responsive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). DDR plays an important role in supporting sustainable peace. By embedding gender perspectives and by ensuring women's meaningful participation in DDR programmes, we maximize their impact on sustainable peace and recovery.

The [Gender Responsive Peacekeeping Operations Policy](#) and the [Integrated DDR Standards \(IDDRS\)](#) offer strategic guidance on the implementation of gender-responsive approaches that take into account the different gendered roles of men, women, boys and girls. Efforts to ensure that the contributions of women ex-combatants and women peacebuilders are at the core of DDR initiatives are visible across our peace operations. For example, our UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has provided support to women's active engagement in the national committees on security institutions and arrangements, including in DDR.

New initiatives and tools, particularly the implementation of Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects, have strengthened women's roles as community leaders and peacebuilders. This approach has not only promoted community engagement in DDR programmes in targeted countries but also consolidated strategic partnerships between the UN,

governments, host communities, civil society organizations, and women leaders

DDR needs to be gender-responsive to make a positive contribution to peace and stability in conflict-affected communities. Against the backdrop of the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), UN peacekeeping is redoubling its efforts to fully implement the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. We remain fully committed to further enhance gender-responsive DDR to ensure that we maximize our impact for the communities we serve.



MR. JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE OPERATIONS

UNITED NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

From former combatants to peacebuilders, women fulfill a wide set of roles in the effective implementation of **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes**. Promoting gender-responsive DDR through meaningful participation of women at all stages of DDR is essential for the success and sustainability of interventions.

Across DDR processes, women combatants usually represent a small percentage of demobilized caseloads. Despite this limitation, the implementation of DDR-related tools, notably **Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects**, allows DDR components in peace operations to mobilize and empower women towards mitigating local conflict, preventing recruitment into armed groups and building community resilience, including its capacity to absorb ex-combatants.

Noting the development of innovative approaches and the surge of new challenges, the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the [UN Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\) on Women, Peace and Security](#) offers a unique opportunity to review lessons learned and take stock of good practices in promoting gender-responsive DDR processes.

Moreover, the Secretary-General in his recent [Call to Action on Women, Peace and Security in peacekeeping contexts](#) called upon peacekeeping partners, including Governments, the United Nations System, regional organizations and the civil society to take bold actions to translate WPS commitments into reality.

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RES 1325

In the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Department of Peace Operations – through the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI), the Gender Unit and the Strategic Communications Section - has compiled a series of good practices, lessons learned as well as stories from the field on promoting gender-responsive DDR processes. The initiative demonstrates DPO's commitment towards promoting the WPS agenda and ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation as a political and peacekeeping norm, in line with the Secretary-General's report on WPS ([S/2020/946](#)), strategic frameworks with regional partners and the [Action for Peacekeeping \(A4P\)](#), as well as the [Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#).

This document is informed by field practice and highlights the increasing political emphasis, especially through UN Security Council mandated tasks, on ensuring gender mainstreaming in DDR processes as a key element for promoting peace and security. This includes addressing sexual violence, considering the different needs of women and girls, and ensuring protection of women from violence. The document showcases activities in line with the [Integrated DDR Standards \(IDDRS\)](#) and the [2018 Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Operations Policy](#).

ACCELERATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE DDR

Call to Action on Women, Peace and Security in peacekeeping contexts



Prioritize and invest in community-based local women's networks



Harness data and gender analysis for accountable decision-making



Accelerate and leverage women's mobilization to transform peace and political processes



Systemize women's leadership to inform conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, and protection



Create dynamic and innovative partnerships to enhance women's participation

EVOLUTION OF THE WPS AGENDA

SCR 1325 First SCR to recognize women's leadership to achieve international peace and security: addresses the impact of war on women and their contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

SCR 1820 First SCR to recognize conflict related sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and a critical component of the maintenance of international peace and security.

SCR 1888 Strengthens tools for implementing SCR 1820 through assigned leadership, judicial response expertise and reporting mechanisms.

SCR 1889 Addresses women's exclusion from peacebuilding planning and institutions and consequent lack of adequate funding for their needs.

SCR 1960 Urges the Secretary-General to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on sexual violence in conflict, and better cooperation among UN actors for a system-wide response to sexual violence.

SCR 2106 Requests the Secretary-General and relevant UN entities to assist national authorities with the effective participation of women in addressing sexual violence concerns.

SCR 2122 Sets out concrete methods for strengthening women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

SCR 2467 Names structural gender inequality and discrimination as root causes of sexual violence.

SCR 2493 Further urges greater representation of women in formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and security.

2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020

SCR 1325: Calls for considering the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents in the planning of DDR (OP 13).

SCR 1820: Effective protection from violence against women in DDR processes (OP 10).

SCR 1888: Takes in to account the needs of women and girls in the planning of DDR programmes and ensures their full access to the same (OP 13).

SCR 1889: Sexual violence issues to be specifically addressed in DDR processes (OP 17).

SCR 1960: States, with support from the international community, are to increase access to health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance and socio-economic reintegration services for victims of sexual violence. 8-9

SCR 2106: DDR processes establish protection mechanisms for women and children in cantonment sites, offering trauma and reintegration support to former associates/ combatants of AGAF (OP 16).

SCR 2122: Promotes gender equality and empowers women in conflict and post-conflict DDR programmes (OP 4).

SCR 2467: Ensures the integration of gender analysis and training into national DDR processes. (OP 23, 27)

SCR 2493: Requests the appointment of gender and/or women protection advisers to facilitate women's full and effective participation and protection in DDR (OP 10).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of integrated DDR processes should aim to address the specific needs of women and girls, as well as men and boys, taking into account their different experiences, roles, capacities and responsibilities during and after conflict. Specific interventions should be developed to ensure equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages of a DDR process ([IDDRS 2.10 on UN Approach to DDR](#)).

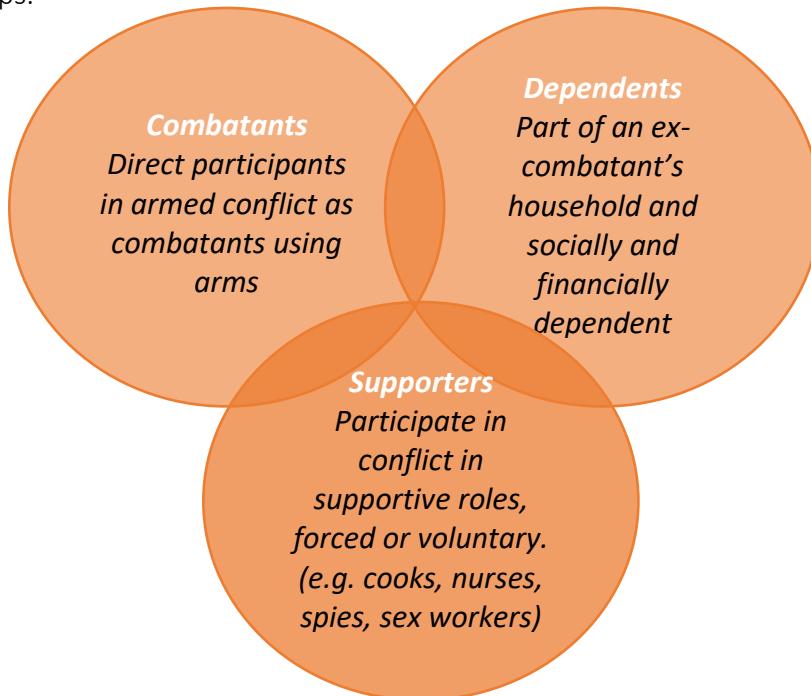
The following principles of gender equality should be applied

- **Non-discrimination, fair and equitable treatment:** No group or individual should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, political opinion, or other personal characteristics or associations. This is particularly important when establishing eligibility criteria for entry into DDR processes.
- **Gender equality and women's participation:** Encouraging gender equality means recognizing and supporting the equal rights of women and men, and girls and boys in the DDR process. Their different experiences and needs should be recognized and reflected in the analysis, design and implementation of DDR processes. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation should be factored at all stages.
- **Respect for human rights:** DDR processes should support ways of preventing reprisal or discrimination against, or stigmatization of those who participate. Due respect must be given to uphold all Human Rights.

ROLES OF WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

The roles of women in armed groups/forces and conflict are complex and often nontransparent. While women and girls in armed groups participate as armed combatants, they also perform other functions, by choice or coercion.

In DDR processes, women beneficiaries are often categorized in three groups.



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Given the diversity of functions performed by women in conflict-affected contexts, promoting gender-responsive DDR at all stages is crucial for the success and sustainability of interventions. This entails creating a protective environment, granting access to benefits and ensuring women's meaningful participation in the assessment, design and implementation of DDR initiatives.

Women's full and meaningful engagement at the beginning of peace negotiations generates greater buy-in and strengthens accountability for implementation. Women's participation makes peace more durable because, with their input, agreements go beyond the realm of power to the realities of people. Engaging women leaders, combatants, peacebuilders and their networks promotes their participation in the decision-making process and guides the integration of gender perspectives.

Harnessing capacities among women combatants, supporters and dependents, as well as community members is essential for promoting long-term transformation of societies. Women's organizations and women leaders constitute key partners and must be encouraged to support the implementation of integrated DDR processes.

The implementation of Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects constitutes a useful approach for increasing women's participation and mobilizing their support towards mitigating local violence and preventing

the recruitment of at-risk youth in conflict-affected contexts. By providing formal education, vocational training and income-generating initiatives, CVR projects serve to engage and empower women, thus creating an enabling environment for social change.

Gendered dimensions of disarmament and Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) are critical to addressing the implications of weapons in the context of operations. Weapons, ammunition and explosives have different impacts on men and women. In connection with their differing perceptions of these arms, gender identities must be integrated into all stages of disarmament and WAM initiatives to facilitate the success of DDR processes. Furthermore, gender-sensitive arms control operations are proven to be more effective in addressing the impact of the illicit circulation and misuse of weapons.

DDR processes should be guided by in-depth gender analysis and the collection of sex and age disaggregated data as means to assess needs, develop targeted, evidence-based interventions and promote women's meaningful participation. In addition to contributing to the decision-making process, women should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of interventions, targeting both ex-combatants as well as community members.

To ensure effective protection at all times, DDR processes should include mechanisms for mitigating security risks, including protection from conflict-related sexual violence and assisting survivors.

MINUSCA: Gender-responsive approach: gradually shifting beneficiaries to implementing partners in charge of sensitizing and identifying subsequent cohorts of beneficiaries ensures sustainability of Community Violence Reduction projects.

Locations: 6 localities

Partnerships: women-led CSO

Beneficiaries: 1,195 women

MINUSMA: Gender-responsive approach: improving female staffing and representation within the Mission and national counterparts greatly improved participation and involvement of women ex-combatants and enhanced human rights, protection, and SGBV programming.

Locations: Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu

Partnerships: Civil Society Organizations

Beneficiaries: 16,656 women

UNAMID: Gender-responsive approach: inclusive assessment, planning, and implementation of community stabilization projects result in opportunities to combat harmful gender norms, promote social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence.

Locations: Darfur

Partnerships: CSOs, national authorities

Beneficiaries: 1,952 women

UNSOM: Gender-responsive approach: providing technical support to national authorities in developing and implementing inclusive policies to support women leaving violent extremist groups.

Locations: Mogadishu, Baidoa, Kismayo

Partnerships: IOM, national authorities

Beneficiaries: 150 former Al-Shabaab

UNVMC: Gender-responsive approach: targeted public information campaigns and continuous engagement with women ex-combatants through dialogue forums and civil society improved the gender-sensitivity of the peace.

Locations:

Partnerships: national authorities

Beneficiaries: 600 women

MONUSCO: Gender-responsive approach: embedding gender-sensitivity within the internal project planning and approval mechanisms within the mission in partnership with mission gender expertise.

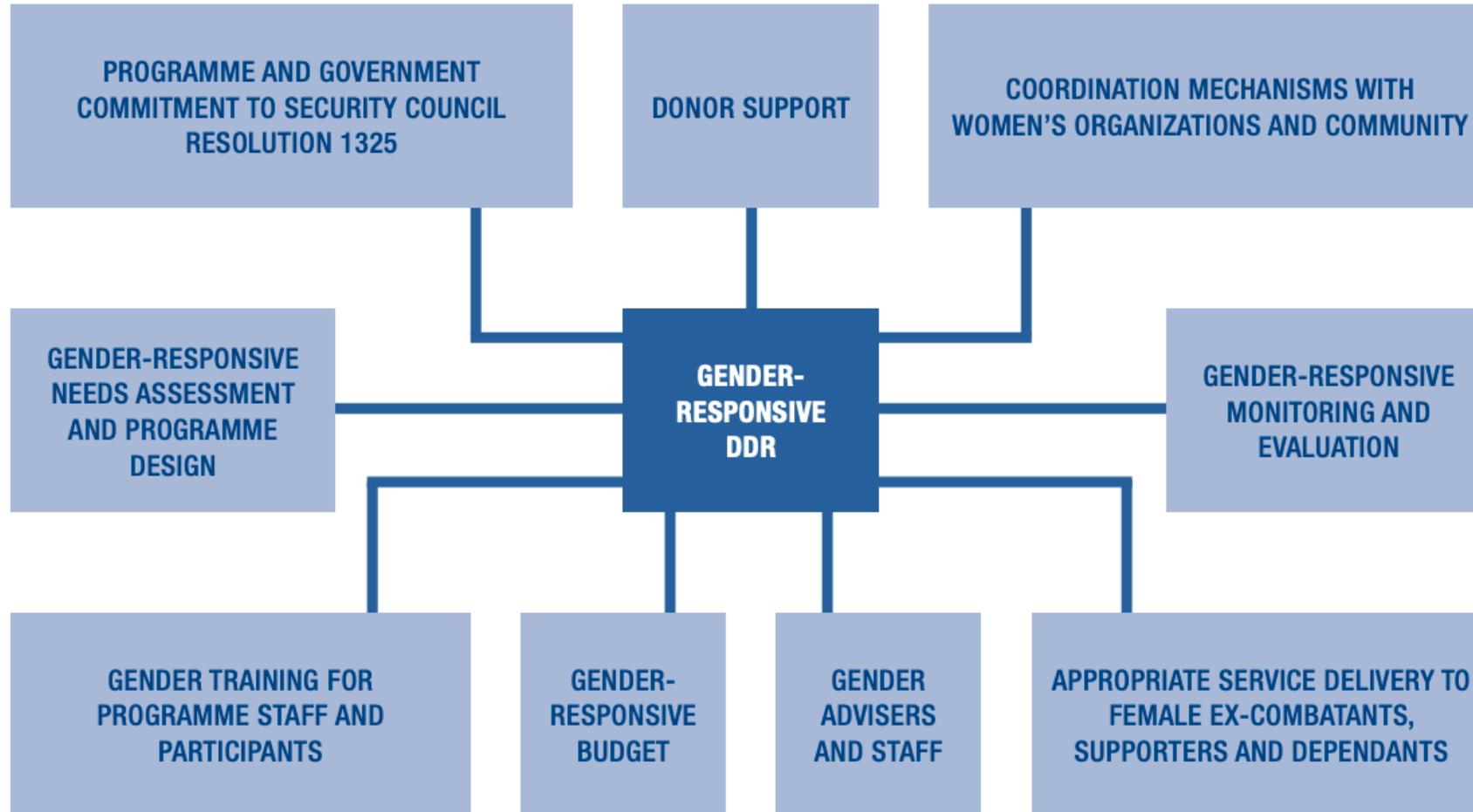
Locations: Eastern provinces

Partnerships: Internal coordination

Beneficiaries: 1,239 women

Gender-responsive DDR

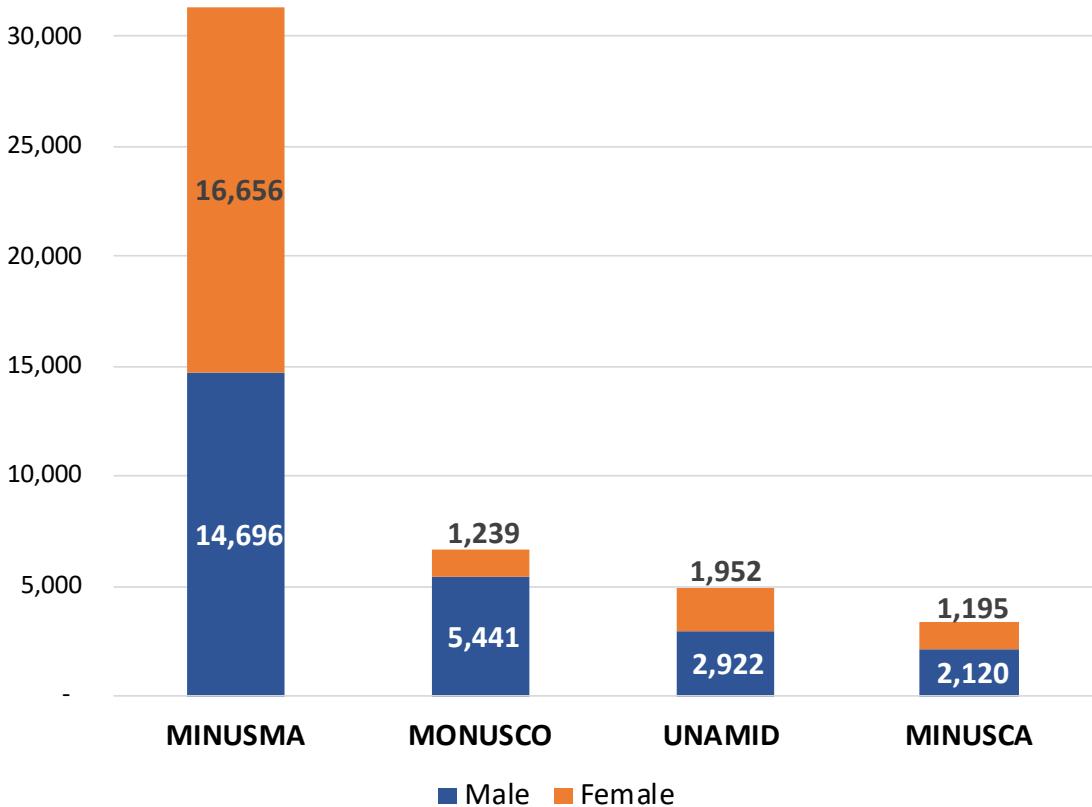
Key elements



IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender and DDR

CVR BENEFICIARIES IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Sex-disaggregated data (FY 19/20)



UNVMC: Strengthening women's participation in DDR processes

In Colombia, women significantly increased their participation throughout peace negotiations. By the end of peace talks, up to one-third of delegates in Havana were women. The establishment of the Gender Sub-Commission constituted a milestone. This body was integrated by women government delegates and by women delegates of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), and was responsible for revising agreed commitments and ensuring gender mainstreaming.

In Colombia, women's participation increased throughout peace negotiations and led to a gender-sensitive national reintegration strategy.

Once the comprehensive agreement was adopted, a complex institutional architecture was designed to monitor and implement its provision, including a Special Forum on Gender, comprised of civil society members. In 2017, FARC's National Gender Commission formulated its own reintegration strategy for women. Subsequently, the National Reintegration Council created a technical Working Group on Gender to advance gender actions of the national reintegration strategy.

During the ceasefire and laying down of weapons, a tripartite mechanism for monitoring and verification was established between the Colombian Government, FARC and the UN Mission. This included a gender component comprised of a network of gender focal points for each component, within regional and local offices to advance gender-responsive approaches.

From conflict to peace

In 1992, several members of an indigenous community suddenly disappeared in Colombia. Among them, “Adeline” clearly remembers the disappearance of her aunt and two cousins. The community had suffered from violence in the past. Given the fear that the same could occur with her own family, “Adeline” saw joining the armed group as an option to ensure protection.

As part of the armed group, “Adeline” felt her life changed completely by serving and supporting others. She remembered the collective work on tasks such as harvesting, and said she missed the solidarity among group members.

As peace negotiations advanced, “Adeline” increased her expectations for achieving peace through political means instead of armed conflict. Four years after the peace accord, she expressed concern regarding its effective implementation. In her view, key issues remained unaddressed, particularly the sustainability of productive projects and access to land.

“Adeline” is a woman former combatant of FARC-EP in the process of reintegration as a result of the 2016 peace process. Currently, she is part of the Community Action Board, focusing on the Health Committee. In this capacity, she fulfills activities as a nurse. Most importantly, she stressed that women can significantly support the peace process. Despite challenges, “Adeline” reiterated her commitment with the peace process.



AMOR POR LA VIDA

MUCHA FORTALEZA
PARA CONSTRUIR
LA PAZ

UNAMID: Improving DDR planning through inclusive mechanisms

In Darfur, participatory community needs assessment is integral to the implementation of community stabilization projects (CSPs) to ensure that projects delivered by UNAMID reflect the priority needs of the community and are in line with national and local priorities.

During local assessments, women's broad participation, including through representation of women's groups, civil society organizations and community leaders, creates the necessary space for ensuring their direct contribution in decision-making processes. Beyond the assessment phase, gender inclusivity in CSPs is also sought throughout the planning and implementation phase.

The adoption of a gender-sensitive approach allows the mission to deliver projects designed by women, for women and that take into account cultural sensitivities. Recent projects included the construction of women's centers and the facilitation of engagement in activities such as tailoring and embroidery, food processing and perfume making and leatherworks. By empowering women, interventions also serve to counter gender stereotypes. Participation is also promoted by defining minimum gender quotas with regards to direct beneficiaries.

In Darfur, participatory community needs assessment is integral to the implementation of community stabilization projects.

Mobilizing and empowering women

Two years ago, the future looked bleak for “Suhair” and her two children. The mother’s fortunes were set to change when, during a women’s meeting in 2015, she became aware of the livelihood training programme in El Geneina. The programme was supported by UNAMID through Community Stabilization projects (CSP) and implemented by a local NGO.

As part of the project, “Suhair” was trained in food processing and perfume making. Currently, she runs a bustling confectionery business. Through her successful

“My life has changed, and I am grateful to UNAMID because without their support I would not be where I am today...Now I make much more, although the business is seasonal »

business, “Suhair” was able to renovate her home, converting it from thatch to brick and mortar. Moreover, her business allowed her to send her eldest child to kindergarten and has helped her younger brother open a shop. “My life has changed, and I am grateful to UNAMID because without their support I would not be where I am today,” says “Suhair”.

Previously, life was a struggle for the divorced mother who was working as a household maid and made bricks to supplement her meagre income. “Now I make much more, although the business is seasonal,” she says. “Suhair” works with a team of three other women, who are also doing well. Two members of the group specialize in food processing, while the other two focus on perfume making, which has steady demand. This approach helps to protect the women from the seasonality of the confectionery line and to operate profitably throughout the year.



Photo: UNAMID

MONUSCO: Improving programme design through gender-responsiveness

MONUSCO has focused its efforts on ensuring gender sensitivity in its internal planning and budgetary mechanisms to improve targeting of women participants. Currently, 30% of the beneficiaries from CVR programmes are women.

In a continuous effort towards gender-responsiveness, before CVR projects are implemented, the Quality Assurance Management Teams (QAMTs) - which includes Gender experts - conducts initial reviews and clearances. After QAMTs and Gender Affairs makes the first clearance, projects land at the Project Approval Committee (PRC) at HQ for final approvals. These are then also shared with the Gender section, where additional gender-sensitivity measures are applied where needed. This internal quality and substantive review process has resulted in a more inclusive and supportive space for women in both DDR operations and CVR projects. These include: gender sensitive outreach material and messages for promoting DDR and targeting women and/or gender sensitive issues are



Women beneficiaries harvesting crops from CVR income generation project in Lubumbashi (Haut-Katanga)

produced and disseminated among targeted armed groups and community stakeholders (through printed and electronic media); local project committees are required to include women representatives; and project proposals are vetted to ensure that beneficiary data is sex-disaggregated.

Many stories, one country

Throughout time and across regions, women fulfil a variety of roles during armed conflict. In DRC, “Shena” was forced to join the militia after her village was attacked. According to her, children associated with armed groups had no prospects or ambition beyond their military tasks. In her words, “It was a life where others decided our life. The choice belonged to our militia leaders and we had ceased to have rights. We just had obligations to fight against those who didn't share our ideals.”

Despite challenges, many former combatants have pursued a path of peace. A former militia member, “Isa” participates in discussions on social dialogue with other women. She believes that progress has been achieved through the implementation of CVR projects. In her view, such initiatives have allowed her to provide for her family, facilitated her reintegration into the community and have given her access to psychosocial treatment.

As a complement, “Maisha” confirms feeling included in her community, while acknowledging that there is still a long way to go. In her view, with the sensitization of community leaders on women’s role in decision making and their involvement in women organizations, women have the space for giving their opinion. Moreover, women have been nominated for posts of responsibility.



MINUSCA: Enabling women-led organizations as key partners in the implementation of CVR

As part of its community violence reduction programme, the DDR section has placed special emphasis on women and their involvement in the programme. They are community leaders, members of the Local Committees of the CVR projects, beneficiaries from the programme, as well as associates and members of armed and self-defense groups.

MINUSCA places special emphasis on including women and women-led organizations as members of the local committees of CVR projects, as they take on cross-cutting role in the programme. They contribute to the identification of beneficiaries and sensitize their communities for the CVR programme and different issues including social cohesion, reconciliation and gender-based violence. They have an important mediation role in the community, and also accompany the beneficiaries in the implementation of their income-



"Nouvel Elan", is a shop in Bangui managed by an ex-combatant and beneficiary of the CVR project. With this activity, the young woman is now independent and can send her two children to school.

generating activities. Further to these leadership roles, women represented 39% of direct beneficiaries in MINUSCA's CVR projects in 2019/2020. Women, as beneficiaries take part in CVR training in various sectors such as tailoring, business, agriculture, farming and even activities traditionally practiced by men such as mechanics, masonry and carpentry.

From past dreams into a new reality

As a child, "Anel" dreamed of one day becoming a pilot. However, her life drastically changed in 2013. While selling goods at a small town, the population was stormed by an armed group, which forcefully recruited several community members, including herself. This action was followed by the destruction of houses and personal properties.

During her association to the armed group, "Anel" performed tasks as a cleaning lady at the central base. Often times, she felt consumed by a desire for revenge against those who forcefully recruited her. However, her mother advised her to refrain from any action.

Despite threats and the risk of potential retaliation, "Anel" finally decided to flee to Bria. In 2019, following sensitization activities conducted by local authorities, she decided to participate in the implementation of the CVR projects. As a beneficiary of CVR initiatives, "Anel" received vocational training and participated in income-generating activities such as the construction of a new training centre and soap production.

According to "Anel", the implementation of CVR projects served to bolster local activities and empower women. With the surge of the COVID-19 crisis, her skills were essential to produce soap and distribute to vulnerable groups.



Photo: MINUSCA

MINUSMA: Improving DDR outcomes through women representation in DDR process

In Mali, improving women representation within the mission and partner institutions has improved DDR outcomes. In Gao, Timbuktu, and Mopti, the DDR process have greatly benefited from the involvement of women practitioners from the mission, particularly the Accelerated DDR Integration Processes (ADDR-I).

The presence and participation of women DDR/SSR practitioners, especially in the areas outreach and sensitization, substantially enhanced the trust and confidence of the women combatants. This encouraged them to participate in DDR and SSR processes. Likewise, women ex-combatants have become more involved. In Mopti, the mission hired female nurses and clerks, to support the ongoing nationally led human rights and SGBV programming. Their presence and contributions improved



Local girls and women assist in the construction of a training center for women and youth in Berrah as part of a CVR project.

the functioning of the national community rehabilitation program, which is a key part of the government's overall DDR integration strategy.

Promoting gender mainstreaming within State institutions

Women play a key role in fostering gender-responsive process while fulfilling tasks within State institutions. In her capacity as a Senior Defense Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Bintou Maiga promoted the development of the second National Action Plan of 2015-2017 in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Noting the need to ensure women's meaningful participation in the DDR process, LTC Maiga was the only woman appointed to the National Commission on DDR and holds the position of Chairperson of the Socioeconomic Reintegration Subcommittee. Moreover, LTC Maiga participated in the development of the new DDR strategy that promotes women's participation in the peace process.

With her experience and lessons learned in the field, LTC Maiga has focused her actions on the following areas: i) Conduct gender-sensitive conflict analysis, ii) Consult regularly and extensively with women, iii) Rely on communities during the implementation phase, iv) Involve women ex-combatants in DDR sensitization programmes, v) Ensure that awareness-raising efforts reach women ex-combatants, and vi) Share experiences and advocate for policy and strategies.

In her capacity as a Senior Defense Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Bintou Maiga promoted the development of the second National Action Plan of 2015-2017 in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.



UNSOM: Rehabilitating women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab

In 2013, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) developed the National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants with support from international partners including IOM and UNSOM. Until 2018, the National Programme mainly focused on disengaged male combatants and lacked gender-specific interventions to address the needs of women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab.

In 2019, through funding provided by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), IOM Somalia, UNSOM and national partners initiated the provision of rehabilitation support to women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab. Through women-led civil society organizations (CSOs), IOM engaged over 150 women associated with Al-Shabaab and 1,000 community members in holistic and gender-sensitive services to promote rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration.

The initiative was catalytic for the mobilization of additional resources and the construction of two (2) rehabilitation centres in Baidoa and Kismaayo. The rehabilitation of former members includes the provision of comprehensive services such as monthly allowance, case management, religious counselling, basic education, livelihood and small-business development training.

Finding belonging in Baidoa

Women who leave violent extremist groups in Somalia often find themselves as head of households, caring for young children, and yearning for safety, security and a better future for themselves and their children. On this journey, women often face stigma, isolation, displacement and struggle to find a sense of belonging in their communities.

“Aisha” and her two small children fled from her small rural hometown after separating and divorcing from her husband. The 36-year-old woman travelled to Baidoa with her children to start a new chapter in their life. However, soon after her arrival, stories of “Aisha’s” past association with Al-Shabaab began to spread quickly within the community.

Due to fear, community members often avoided “Aisha” and her children. As a result, she felt more and more isolated, struggling to fit in and make new connections. One day, as she expressed, life offered her a “second chance”. She learned about the government’s offer of amnesty, and the opportunity to access critical services at a transitional rehabilitation centre in Baidoa, which assisted women formerly associated with the group.

At the rehabilitation centre, “Aisha” and her children received food, basic health care and education. Moreover, through the protection allowance provided by the center, “Aisha” managed to rent her own place and, with the little amount that is left, she has been able to meet her children’s basic needs.



Photo: IOM/Somalia

Liberia: Remembering past experiences

One day in 1990, “Aluna” went to fetch water. This day would change her life forever when she found herself unable to return to her parents. She was only a child, just around 10 years of age. Confused, she decided to follow those around her until she encountered her aunt and her husband. Although they protected her, the group fell into an ambush.

Suddenly, soldiers took her aunt's husband to the front, brutally killing him before turning to her aunt. To this day, “Aluna” remembers this experience, which left her alone and vulnerable with the most horrid images in her memory.

All women were then brought to a small town. After a few days, many were killed. Fearing for her life, “Aluna” tried to escape; however, she was captured. A local commander demanded that she join the group with him and threatened the safety of her family. Terrified of the alternative, “Aluna” agreed to follow him. Among other women, she was the victim of severe abuses and sexual violence. One night, “Aluna” succeeded in escaping.

Today, “Aluna” lives as a young, modern and independent women, who earns her living as a motorcycle taxi driver. However, she has faced new challenges. Despite all hardship, she has continuously contributed to the community and peacebuilding efforts and empowers women and girls to promote stability.

**For more information and access to other publications,
please visit our official website:**

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration>